

Writing a Strong Thesis

A thesis controls an essay. A strong thesis is necessary in order to build strong arguments in order to prove a position on a topic.

To write a strong thesis, keep the following in mind:

- ✓ A thesis tells the reader what topic you have an opinion on
- ✓ A thesis also answers “so what”—why should the reader care? Why is your discussion going to be important? What will the reader understand when finished? What does the topic cause or how does it impact?
- ✓ A thesis does not list the arguments you’ll be making (though sometimes this is an effective way to start thinking about your opinion on the matter). It is an “umbrella” statement that finds a common thread in upcoming arguments.
- ✓ A thesis is objective (in 3rd person) and does not use “I” or “you” anywhere in its contents.

So, here are some examples of poor thesis statements you need to avoid:

1. Loneliness is displayed in the novel *Of Mice and Men*.

Ms. Wray’s likely comment: Yes it is. So what? Why do I care? What does loneliness *cause* or how does loneliness *impact* the characters?

2. I think discrimination is the most destructive force in the book.

Ms. Wray’s likely comment: “I”? I know you think. Why do you think it’s the most destructive force? Because....

3. George is not justified in killing Lennie at the end of the novel because he breaks the law, has no right to assume Lennie’s decision making power, and just wants all of the problems Lennie brings them to end.

Ms. Wray’s likely comment: You’re listing your arguments. It’s an ok first step, but now look at what’s common between those arguments. Develop an “umbrella” thesis that incorporates the common points without listing the arguments you’ll be developing in the body.

Now, some *model* thesis statements. Using these is not an option:

1. Steinbeck, in his novel *Of Mice and Men*, evokes sympathy for his characters by depicting them as misfits in our society due to their limitations.

- a. What’s the topic?
- b. What’s going to be argued?
- c. What are some possible arguments?

2. Though dreams sometimes provide hope in Steinbeck's novel *Of Mice and Men*, the larger the dream the more destructive the impact when it fails to come true.

- a. What's the topic?
- b. What's going to be argued?
- c. What are some possible arguments?

3. Even though unrelated by blood, George had willingly become his "brother's keeper" when he assumed the responsibility for killing Lennie in order to vault him into his final resting place free of the torture and hardship he would otherwise face.

- a. What's the topic?
- b. What's going to be argued?
- c. What are some possible arguments?

Get it? Now, think a little bit, see if you can answer "so what?" and these additional three questions about your own thesis statement. If you can't, take some time to rewrite your thesis at the bottom of your prewrite.